

Funding 'shell game': Construction for new child care spaces is good news, an advocate says, but it will not solve the current problems child care in B.C. is facing [CA-BC] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The news that the provincial government is expanding child-care spaces is being received with some reservations by Darcelle Cottons, a member of the B.C. Association of Child Care Services.

The province is committing \$1.2 million to create 298 new licensed group child-care spaces around the province, which will further expand child-care choices for parents, Langley MLA and Minister of State for Women's Equality Lynn Stephens announced last week.

"This year, we are nearly doubling the funding for construction costs at child-care centres," said Stephens in a prepared release. "We are providing a total of \$2.5 million this year, compared with \$1.5 million last year. The funding formula has also been changed so that small rural communities are eligible for more provincial government funds than in the past."

Capital funding is the cheapest support that can be provided, Cotton said, because it's a one-shot expenditure.

The government is playing a "shell-game," Cottons said - taking away money from child-care and replacing it with less.

Over the past three years, the government has cut close to \$50 million from child care, Cottons said, and has slashed the subsidy program. So even though money is going into the building of new spaces, there are fewer parents out there who can afford to access those spaces, she said.

Stephens said the first round of capital funding this year will go to 14 child-care organizations, allowing them to undertake construction of a new centre or renovation of an existing centre. The funding will create 298 new spaces and will support 260 existing spaces, bringing the total number of child-care spaces benefiting from those funds to 558, she said.

No new spaces are being added in Langley, but Abbotsford, South Delta, Burnaby, and North Vancouver are among those receiving funding.

Applications for capital funds are currently being received for the balance of the 2003/04 program budget.

- reprinted from Advance News

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

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